

## The Moors and the Jews in Spain.

A LECTURE FIRST DELIVERED JAN. 23D, IN THE CHURCH OF THE MESSIAH, AND IN A REVISED FORM FEB. 7, IN THE SINAI TEMPLE, BY REV. DR. K. KOHLER.

Human history recognizes neither boundary lines nor monopolies of culture. In its sweeping march it calls upon all lands and sacred mountains to pour their streams and rivulets of thought and skill into the great ocean of civilization which, by the ever-changing tides of races and by the perpetual ebb and flood of ideas, is ever kept from stagnation. After the gigantic race of Ham had in the very twilight of reason accomplished its great task on the shores of the Persian gulf and of the Nile and in the venerable celestial empire, Semitic civilization prevailed for ages, leaving its vestiges even far beneath the ruins of classic Greece and Rome, to disclose us the main motives of the Homeric songs and the inspiring models of Athenian art. Our modern civilization bears chiefly an Aryan character, since Hellenic philosophy and art, Roman law and the Teutonic sense for independence shaped our lives. Nevertheless, aside from religion which issues from the tents of Sem, the Semitic race joined the Argans in the great labor of modern culture, which, at a deeper observation, appears to be no less Jewish and Mohammedan as it is Christian. To illustrate this, I venture to offer you this lecture of mine on the Moors and the Jews in Spain.

From the very first dawn of European history the Spanish peninsula seems to have occupied a sort of providential position in interlinking the Orient with the Occident. Out of the dark mist overhanging Europe, it first loomed up before the eyes of the Asiatics with its steep pillars of Herculars marking the very borderland of the earth. By the name of Tarsis, Tartessos or Turdetania, it became the distant goal of the enterprising, sea-faring Phœnicians, unto whom it, with its inexhaustible rich mineral treasures, became the Eldorado of antiquity. Long before the glorious reign of David and Solomon, these Canaanite merchants had a magnificent temple erected on the Isle of Cadiz, in honor of their Baal Melcart, or Hercules, and the seashore dotted with mining and saltwork, manufactories and depots for their large trade, the names of which localities have remained until this very day. But then, Carthage, their proud daughter, seized upon this "beautiful garden of the Hesperides, in which golden apples grew on trees." Finally Rome, jealous of the enormous revenues derived from it by her great rival on the other side of the Mediterranean, wrested it from her, and by her own skillful administration rendered it a second Italy. But enervated by the dissipation of the rich and their oppression of the poorer classes, it first fell a prey to the ravaging hosts of the Vandals and Suevi, and as these left for Africa, finally to the Westgoths, who remained there as rulers. Having been, by Bishop Ulphilas, converted to the Arian form of Christianity, their views collided with those of the Catholic Romans, but, Roman language and civilization being superior to their own, they yielded to the power of the Roman clergy. The Gothic kings, like all converts, turned into intolerant zealots. Kissing the dust on the feet of the clergy, they hankered after their carnal passions, taking no regard of the welfare of the people who had welcomed them as deliverers, nor of the prosperity of their country, which showed a rapid decline.

Most of all did the Jews suffer under this despotism. Since when they had been citizens of Spain, we do not know. Whether some had settled in Tarsis to embark in mining speculations, or in the flourishing Phœnician salt fish trade there, as the prophet Jonah might have done but for God's interference with the storm, is hard to tell. The tradition of the Spaniards about several cities there having been built and peopled by the Jews long before the rise of Christianity is hardly trustworthy, as it is most probably circulated there, as elsewhere, by the Jews, for the sake of their being

exonerated from the dismal charge of the crucifixion. Still it can be learned from Rabbinical, as well as from St. Paul's writings, that the Jews there preceded the Christians. Some even traced their pedigree, as silk and woolen weavers, back to the time of the temple. Yet no sooner was Christianity established there as the ruling religion of the empire, than the clergy commenced to sow discord and hatred between the Jews and their Christian fellow-citizens, who stood on the most friendly terms, yea, often in the most intimate contact with them. Measures were taken by the Church and laws passed to the effect of exposing the Jews to every possible humiliation and torture, to deprive them of their large shipping trade, their real estate, yea, to expel them from the land, unless they would undergo the rite of baptism. For some time the kings hesitated to sanction such rigid measures, but the omnipotent hierarchy prevailed. Like the reed before the storm, the Jews bent their heads in submission. Many left to seek refuge in Africa, others, in an unfortunate moment allowed the clergy to sprinkle them with the consecrated water. Alas! it was of far more fatal consequences for the Jewish nation than was the burning of the temple at Jerusalem. For the legislative enactments which ensued offered, seven hundred years later, the very fuel for the ghastly Moloch fires of the Holy Inquisition. At once detecting a still unabated belief in the Oneness of God and a sincere adherence to the Jewish observances and customs in those baptised Jews, the Church bent her whole energy and furious zeal upon excruciating and exterminating these heretics. But for the protection offered to the Jews by the Gothic nobility, which was still strong enough to check the power of the kings, history would have had to record the atrocious deeds of Ferdinand and Isabel, the Catholics, at a much earlier date.

In the mean time a new star had arisen in the East. Behold! a strange handwriting on the wall! Hearken! A mighty trumpet-blast shaking the Church unto its very foundations! The earth trembles under the victorious march of a large host of tall, dark complexioned men, with features betraying the fire of the prophets and the irresistible force of a desert storm, as they with uplifted swords shout forth: *Wallah illa Wallah wa Mohammadun Nabihulu!* Asia and Africa lie prostrate at their feet; now they knock at the gate of Europe. With a few thousand Arabians and so many Moors, Altarik, a brave Moslem, entered Spain, induced by a few princely conspirators, who desired to avenge on King Roderick the wrongs inflicted on them by him. After having fortified himself behind the steep promontory which ever since bears his name, Gibl al Tarik—Mountain of Tarik—(whence the name Gibraltar) he succeeded in landing all his men, and then dispelled the entire Gothic army with which King Roderick had gone forth to meet him. The river Guadalete turned crimson with the blood of the Gothic soldiers and their King. Consternation befell the entire nation; scarcely an attempt was made at defending the capital and the throne. The nobility and clergy fled panic-stricken to the Pyrenean mountains, leaving even the royal treasures, among which there was a golden table, all decked with pearls and diamonds, regarded by the Moslems as Solomon's table, to be carried off as trophies by the invader. Spain, thus unmanned, was at the mercy of the victor. And had Altarik not been checked in his conquering march by Musa, his envious chief, disunited France would in all probability have been overthrown, too. Her southern province was actually overrun and occupied by the Moors, until Charles Martel at last succeeded in driving them back behind the Pyrenees, the natural frontier of the African race. Spain, however, remained for centuries under Moorish, or, rather, Islamic rule, which the Jews, hitherto expelled or expatriated, gladly helped to establish.

It was the arrival of spring for the land, as in place of the cross, which betokened damnation rather than salvation, the crescent was planted on the steeples of the Gothic churches to allow the Jew and the Christian aside of the Mohammedan to worship God each in his own endeared custom. It was the

dawn of a new era of song and sprightliness, of quickened life and enterprise, and of an enlarged horizon and scope for the human race. It was the breath of an invigorating air coming from the Arabian desert to restore the stunned pulses of mankind and to stir up its benumbed mind. The light of reason had since centuries been smothered by the Christian Church, which had ever been led farther away from the plain truths of the sweet Jewish preacher on the Mount. Greek philosophy being dissolved into perplexing dogmas, free inquiry and scientific research were banished, precious libraries and museums burned, philosophers and Unitarian thinkers persecuted by orthodox Christianity. By the violent hands of the raving mob of illiterate bishops and monks Hypatia, the last heathen philosopher in Alexandria, was dragged through her academic hail and torn to death, and the Serapeum, the great library, set on fire. Thus all schools of philosophy, art and science, were put to a close by the Emperor Justinian. Syria and Persia offered a shelter unto the fugitive devotees of knowledge and truth. Christianity, wrapped into night, lulled the world into sleep to sing a funeral dirge over all earthly life while waiting for the resurrection and its Savior's return from heaven. Learning and labor were despised; the clergy forgot how to read and write and how to spell the Lord's prayer.

Into this dark chaos light was brought by a sober-minded, intelligent and energetic race, of the same kindred with Moses and Jesus, also set ablaze by a spark of the Sinai revelation. Owing to the influence of large and powerful tribes of Jews who had settled there for centuries to take part in Arabian song and chivalry, the idea of Allah, the God in whom Abraham confided, had long before Mohammed spread through the Arabian peninsula. And so were the sacred wells and hills of Arabia entwined by them with the legends of the Hebrew patriarchs. The religion of Abraham, as reflected through the prism of Rabbinical lore, was propagated there particularly by a remnant of Jewish, and Christian, Essenes, who devoted their lives to prayer, fasting and alms-giving, rendering Islam, which means submission unto Allah, their watchword. Of a sudden Mohammed, an illiterate camel-driver of Mecca, felt his soul stirred by their faith. In solitary caves he pondered over the idea of restoring the religion of Abraham and thereby uniting the Arabian tribes, hitherto separated by incessant strife and wars of revenge, and addicted to idolatry, incest and infanticide. In wild spasms and ecstatic visions it burst forth like an irrepressible flame. Like a true prophet, he would not heed the promises and threats of his townsmen and their material interest in upholding Mecca, its ancient and most prominent centre, but in bitter sarcasm and glowing zeal denounced their folly and wickedness. With a keen but sensual imagination he held pictures of paradise and hell before them to draw them towards worshipping the sublime and merciful Allah. Still he made but a few converts, and on the other hand a host of embittered enemies. He then fled for his life to Medina, a city largely inhabited by Jews, hoping to be recognized by them as a prophet, but meeting with contempt and derision, notwithstanding his offer to accommodate to the Jewish modes of worship. After this he affected love for, and knowledge of, Christianity, but also failing to be regarded as the peer and superior of Moses and Jesus, as he desired. At last, elated by victories over the Jewish tribes, he turned into a cruel despot and passionate libertine, but at the same time he, by a compromise with the city of Mecca, became the soul and leader of united Arabia. The fire which, when growing unholy consumed the prophet, soon kindled the nation to proclaim the One God upon the ruins of Pagan and Christian idolatry throughout Asia and Africa. The Koran with its teachings about the One sublime God and of justice and tenderness towards the poor and the slaves was carried on the lances' ends over the wide globe, not with the venom of an intolerant sect, but with the pride of a triumphant nation. Christians and Jews were burdened with taxes, but

their lives and their convictions were spared. Idols were destroyed, but the literature, heathenish and Christian, remained untouched. The well known saying ascribed to Omar, the Khalif and son-in-law of Mohammed: "If all the books are confirmatory of the Koran, they are superfluous; if contradictory, they are pernicious. Let them be burnt!" is a fiction of late Christian writers, and likewise the whole story about the destruction of the Alexandrian library by the Moslems. On the contrary, they ever loved heathen poetry and literature, and the high regard for the people of letters forms a remarkable feature of the Koran. It prompted its adherents ever to erect a school house at the side of each mosque. Bedouin song and verse enlivened the soldier's camp and mitigated the Khalif's irascible temper. To transport a Bagdad audience into the desert life, with its adventures in love and war, was the highest ambition of poets and the best admission to fame and royal favor. The translocation of the Chalifate to Damascus and Bagdad soon softened the stern features of the new faith and modified its strict national character, as impressed on it by Omar, the St. Paul of Islamism, by a sort of cosmopolitan rationalism. Persian art and Syrian literature made their influences felt. Oriental splendor and luxury were displayed, music and song cultivated. The Koran interpreters imbibed the philosophical ideas as they were cherished by Jewish and Parsee physicians and by Christian doctors of the liberal Nestorian school, drawn to the court by generous Khalifs. While a fierce and furious war raged between the various Moslem tribes and sects rivaling for the leadership, the one claiming the aristocracy of blood, the other of faith, many theological and philosophical doctrines and schools sprouted forth, stirring the reason and enhancing thirst after knowledge. Greek thought and science found new homes and fertile fields. The works of Plato and Aristotle, of Ptolemy, Hippocrates and Galenus, were unbundled from the dust of ages and translated by Nestorian and Jewish scholars into the Arabic language for Harun Alrashid and Almamun, the illustrious chalifs of the IX. century. A most beneficial exchange of ideas and products of many lands and labors was effected by the revival of commerce by land and sea. The most distant nations were brought into contact with the Moslems by the extension of the empire over three continents, from Spain far into India and China. The acquaintance with so many new lands and people of various modes and habits of life roused a general curiosity and created larger views of the world. Interesting books of travel were written. Geography, botany and zoology were studied. Hindoo astronomy and medicine were compared with the Greek method to improve upon the instruction in the latter by Jewish and Christian doctors. The Hindoo numerals were adopted and then propagated in Europe, thereby to bestow one of the greatest benefits upon humanity. The mariner's compass, without which the Western hemisphere would probably never have been discovered, was borrowed by the Arabians from China and transferred to Western navigators. A far greater debt we owe to them for an invention which became the mainspring of modern civilization, outshining even that of Gutenberg. I mean the paper fabrication, to which they were led by their extensive cotton manufacture in Egypt, the mother-land of the papyrus, as, by an increased hunger after books, they could no longer supply the demand of the old writing material. It is likely, though, that the Chinese flax paper suggested to them the idea. At any rate, they for years fabricated cotton and then linen paper, long before unlettered Christendom was in need of any.

No doubt, many of our ladies to-day would hesitate to dine at a Moslem's table where there are not even knives and forks to be seen, still they stand under great obligations to him for having transported for them from the East many fruits, spices and drugs which now seem almost indispensable ingredients of our meals, and for having offered them a great variety of aromatic plants and oils they would hardly like to miss, yet were altogether unknown in Europe before the Moors came to Spain. You